

REMARKS

The applicants have carefully considered the Office action dated August 21, 2006. Claim 1 has been amended. Claim 19 has been cancelled without prejudice to its further prosecution. In view of the following remarks, all pending claims are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration of all pending claims is respectfully requested.

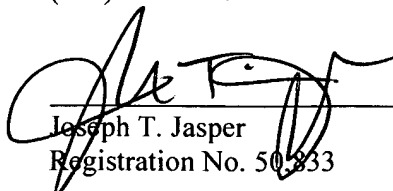
The Office action identified pending claims 1-23 as being directed to two (2) distinct inventions. Specifically, the Office action required an election between claims 2-18, and 20-21 (Group I) and claims 19 and 22-23 (Group II). Claim 1 is a linking claim according to the previous Office action. As set forth in detail below, without denying that the claims are patentably distinct, applicant traverses this election requirement. Subject to that traversal and in accordance with the requirements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.143, applicants hereby provisionally elect Group II for further prosecution in this application.

Claim 1 has been amended to include the recitations of claim 19. Therefore, all pending claims now fall within Group II and are ready for further examination.

If the Examiner is of the opinion that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number identified below.

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